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## Seasons

Welcome to the summer 2020 edition of *Seasons*, the Woodinville Montessori School newsletter for alums, past-families and friends. We hope you will share your news and updates with us, at [alums@woodinvillemontessori.org](mailto:alums@woodinvillemontessori.org).

### Welcome another new alum!

Thanks to COVID-19, this wasn't the ceremony envisioned for our graduating senior, **Taylor Sibthorp**. But as our Class of 2020, Taylor received her diploma on June 12 from Head of School Sunita Pailoor in a very brief, socially-distanced ceremony.

Taylor will enroll at Macalester College in Minn., and we wish her all the best. In May, the high school gave Taylor a surprise care parade (pictured in the header photo), complete with bagpipes from Spanish teacher Alexa Boss.

Taylor's senior project is a well-researched piece of journalism on City of Bothell planning. It is [posted and available for all to read in the Raven Review](#), the newsletter of the High School and Middle School.

(See more photos of Taylor and her teachers, all socially distancing, at her diploma presentation.)



### Running 100 miles through the mountains gives alum a fresh perspective

By **Tony Dell'Ario, 6th grade Class of 1996:**

Your email came right when the organizers of my favorite, beloved trail race, the Cascade Crest Classic 100, put out a call on Instagram for veterans of the race and volunteers to post their favorite memories of the event. I started reminiscing and going through photos, when I realized "that's something I achieved that's pretty noteworthy!" Yes, I ran a 100-mile mountain race after getting this crazy idea into my head in 2017 to try out trail running. Here's a timeline:

In 2016, I ran a half marathon—flat and paved—on somewhat of a whim. I trained, but not much or seriously, and it hurt, but I finished it in under two hours. I didn't run much after that, because I hurt my ankle.

In spring 2017, a close friend of mine who'd been running trail ultramarathons convinced me to try trail running, albeit at the half marathon distance. I figured "maybe I can do that," so I started training with a coach. Immediately upon finishing (it ended up being nearly 14 miles and had around 1,400 ft. of climbing) in about two hours, I thought, "I should run a 50k trail race." I'd never run a marathon.

I spent the rest of 2017 training to run the Orcas Island 50k, a race with around 8,400 ft. of climbing, which seemed insane to me at the time. I started to really fall in love with running, especially in the woods.

After completing that race in about 6 hours and 45 minutes, I immediately told my wife, "I'm going to run 100 miles someday." I ran four more tough 50k mountain ultras throughout 2018 (along with a few non-competitive adventure runs and other oddly difficult races),



Tony's friends and crew at the finish line. (His wife had the giant head printed before his 50-mile race as a unique way of cheering him on.)

dropping time until I reached a personal best of 5:52:25. I set my sights on the Cascade Crest Classic 100.

I developed a stress fracture in my right tibia after the last ultra I ran in 2018 and took the first block of time away from running longer than three days since 2017: a whole three weeks! When I started run/walking again, it felt like I was starting from zero.

In February 2019, I received news I'd earned a spot in Cascade Crest by way of volunteering 24 hours straight (including an overnight course sweeping) at the 2018 event.

I had to run a qualifying 50-mile trail race sometime before the race in August, so I chose the Sun Mountain 50-mile, a beautiful course near Winthrop. Despite being in eastern Washington, it takes place in early May and conditions are usually cool and wet. In 2019, temps unfortunately soared to over 100 degrees by mile 32. I finished in 11 hours and 20 minutes, hot, tired and ill, but still racing with those behind me 'til the end.

I completed eight hours of work with the Washington Trails Association as part of the prerequisites for entering Cascade Crest, and with that, my spot was secured.

From May through the end of July, a month before the race, I put in over 81,000 ft. of climbing along nearly 630 miles of running, much of it deep in the Cascade mountains and alone.

At 9 a.m. on Aug. 24, 2019, I toed the line in Easton, Wash., with 180 other crazy people.

My wife, friends and family all came to miles 36, 55 and 75, resupplying me, helping me change equipment, and generally making sure I wasn't dead; I ran and hiked through the night, experiencing highs and lows that completely changed the way I view the world, and finished the next day before 1 p.m., taking 28 hours, 54 minutes, and 17 seconds to complete the 100-mile journey with over 23,000 ft. of climbing. One hundred-twenty-seven other brave folks finished that day as well, some taking nearly 34 hours to complete the adventure.

The other day, I was extremely stressed out about work (I'm an information security analyst at a local tech startup, working from home), and I thought: "Dude. You ran over 2,100 miles last year. You climbed nearly 250,000 ft.! You ran 100 miles in one go! And you're just a normal guy, not a pro! This is just work." And you know what? It actually helped. People like to (hopefully) jokingly ask questions like, "What're you running from?" I always roll my eyes. But I think I know now a bit better why I do what I do: I chose to face difficulty when I had the strength to do it, not because I was strong but because I thought I was just *average* and didn't truly know what was possible. And every time I try some new, tough thing, I find out that while there may be limits to what's achievable, we A) don't know what those limits are necessarily, and B) they're almost certainly higher than we think.



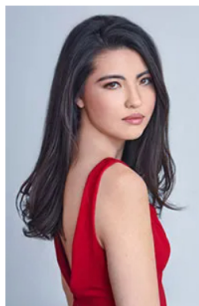
## Life updates and graduations

**Natalia Girling**, 9th Grade Class of 2013: It's great to see how WMS has grown since I graduated and I'd love to share with you how I am doing. In the beginning of May, I graduated from California College of the Arts in San Francisco with a BA in Interaction Design and a minor in Visual Studies. I am moving from SF back to Seattle to begin the job search.

**Nicole Wastell**, 8th Grade Class of 2012: I recently graduated from Western Washington University with a degree in Psychology and a minor in Chemistry. I currently am working at the Sendan Center as a CBT implementing skill acquisition plans and behavior plans. I went to Israel last summer to study abroad where I learned about Judaism and how to read/write/speak Hebrew.

**Tristen Wastell**, 8th Grade Class of 2009, graduated from Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo with a BS in Mechanical Engineering in June 2018. He is currently at Codesmith in Venice, CA (LA area) in their intensive coding program.

**Finn Davis Owsley**, 8th Grade Class of 2016: Finn attended WMS for 11 years, from EC through 8th grade. This spring he graduated from Lakeside School and plans to attend Case Western Reserve University in the fall, where he is interested in studying math. Finn loved the Montessori math materials from Day 1, and took full advantage of the opportunities to investigate and explore his interest, with teachers who supported, challenged, and inspired him at every level. At WMS he also learned to be a compassionate young man who is keenly interested in social justice and loves to question authority.



**Mina Haines**, 7th Grade Class of 2014, is a freshman at the UW where she is studying business and recently made the Dean's List. She is also modeling and acting.



In October 2019, **Alison DeBoise**, 9th Grade Class of 2010, began volunteering weekends at the new Burke Museum in the archaeology department!



## We said goodbye to Bogda!

When **Bogda Zbyszewski** arrived at Woodinville Montessori School in 1989, she had a small child, a beginning English vocabulary and a history degree; and had been out of communist Poland for just seven years.

On June 26, Bogda clocked out of Woodinville Montessori for the final time after 30-plus years as the WMS bookkeeper. She admitted to mixed feelings—mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its unprecedented effect on all routines and expectations. But for that, she had said she was retiring at 66, and she has grandchildren to enjoy, and family in Poland to visit.

Bogda, her husband and son, immigrated to the US just two weeks before the communist government there declared martial law in December 1981. The government wanted to break the Solidarity movement that would eventually be very influential in the fall of communism in 1989.

"Just two weeks later I wouldn't have been able to come," Bogda says. "In a communist country, curfew meant curfew."

The family moved first to Arizona, found it too hot, then moved to Colorado before landing in Washington state. Her son was 3 years old and she was taking English classes, when she realized he needed to attend school with other children, and that she needed to find a job. She sought out day care and schools, found a Montessori school, enrolled her son and took a position there as an assistant and babysitter. When the owner closed the school, she recommended the children go to Woodinville Montessori. With her son in half-day classes with Debbie Hines at WMS, Bogda became a half-day assistant to Carol Stonich, before stepping into a half-day office position that opened that August.

"I was good at math, then I was full time in the office and the rest is history," Bogda says with a chuckle. "I never thought about being a bookkeeper, I'm detail-oriented, I like things to be done. I think it was good for me, something I could do with limited English."

From the first building at the Woodinville campus to two campuses and 400 students, Bogda takes with her many favorite memories: of day care, studying (she would drop into classrooms and listen) and knowing all of the kids.

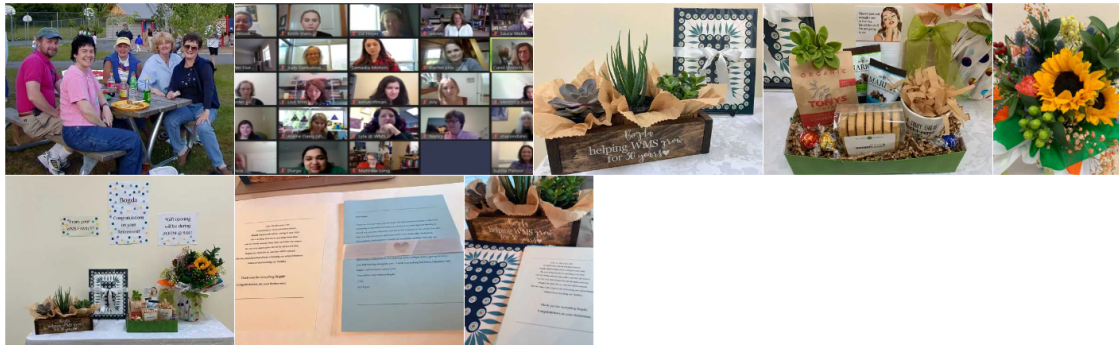
"It was so much fun, really like family," she says. "Once a year we went somewhere to be together for a few days."

Bogda is now helping keep an eye on her two grandchildren, and she would like to visit a cousin in Utah. She hasn't been to Poland for three years, but is hoping to go there for her mother's 90th birthday this October, and stay for several weeks.

On June 22 the WMS staff threw a virtual retirement party for Bogda via Zoom. Everyone had a chance to write a special letter for her, and of course, there were gifts. Bogda has been dedicated to the school, and to doing her job well throughout her time with WMS. She will be missed!



Happy retirement, Bogda!



## Congratulate our staff for their years of service

On June 22, we recognized our staff for their years of service. Thank you to:

### 20 years

Amy Fujimoto

### 15 years

Alaine Davis, Carol Roorbach and Jody Sagawa

### 5 years

Durga Kanjinghat, Kaitlyn McElrath, Emily Schlieman and Dhunitha Yelamali

<b>20 YEARS</b>						
 Amy Fujimoto Lower Elementary Teacher	 Alaine Davis Middle & High School Teacher	 Carol Roorbach Art Specialist	 Jody Sagawa Early Childhood Teacher	 Durga Kanjinghat Lower Elementary Teacher	 Kaitlyn McElrath Upper Elementary Teacher	 Emily Schlieman Librarian & Club House
<b>5 YEARS</b>						
 Dhunitha Yelamali Early Childhood Teacher	 <b>Years of Service Awards</b> Faculty & staff, thank you for your years of dedication to WMS!					

## Staff spotlight—Sharon Dunn

*Seasons highlights Sharon Dunn, one of WMS's longest-serving teachers. Sharon now works in the Secondary program after starting as an Upper Elementary teacher. Throughout her time at WMS, she has watched the school expand both in campus size and program levels. Sharon, who has a Master's degree in journalism from Boston University, describes her time at WMS since starting in 1996 below. [Learn more about Sharon's](#) educational and Montessori background on our website. (This piece previously appeared in a past issue of the weekly Grapevine newsletter.)*

I joined Woodinville Montessori School as an Upper Elementary teacher in 1996. Everything about the school felt profoundly different: I am a very urban person, originally from New York City, and WMS at that time felt almost more country than suburban. Woodinville as a city was much less developed; the land adjacent to the campus was not in use, traffic was decent, and neither Woodinville Wine Country nor UW Bothell existed.

WMS itself was a close and connected community, with a team of two co-teachers and an assistant, everyone following each student, all of us talking daily about the lessons we were giving, how the children were progressing, and any developments, accomplishments and challenges. The features of a WMS education: teams of dedicated teachers providing education, consideration and compassion to students, were much in evidence then — and have remained a hallmark of our school.

In the late '90s, Upper Elementary students and their lesson materials were a bit big for the western building of the Woodinville campus; the class filled the room and often spilled out into the main entryway. Everyone had to be adept at "walking around the work"—and they were. Math extensions, colonial collage posters, versions of cave paintings—work continually decorated the room. My beloved material was the decimal checkerboard. A favorite memory is of a group of 5th and 6th graders constructing a map of exploration based on antique cartography of the world and featuring everything from drawings of sea monsters and figures for the four winds to locator information flags for many Native American tribes. The outcome was such a lovely representation of Montessori group creativity that I have kept it for 20 years and shared it with aspiring and active Upper Elementary teachers. Other great recollections include students confecting creative, colorful PowerPoints on topics like "Jamaica Plus Bob Marley" and international music. We even pulled together a couple of remarkable dances; once, at a North American Montessori Teachers Association conference in Bellevue, students advocated for technology by displaying PowerPoints on Ancient Egypt.

These kinds of interactions with students were inspiring as I committed to teaching. Students were continually open to levels of challenge, to thoughtful exchanges, to mastering materials and abstract concepts, and to relating to one another and their teachers as human beings of intrinsic worth. This is a distinguishing characteristic of Montessori education—the valuation of each person and the blurring of hierarchical structures that too often define and constrain education. The purpose of being in WMS has always seemed evident: our mission is to maximize our students' potential to the extent that doing so is within our purview. It's also to create common understandings and a sense of local to global connectedness. This means sharing stories, working hard, experiencing common lessons and texts, and also being able to take individual and small group journeys in the acquisition of knowledge and the development of deeper understanding.

The way in which students in collaboration with teachers and families carry out this mission of growth necessarily does differ at various levels to reflect and address what is fitting and what is necessary for each age cohort. When we started the Middle School in 2003, the group of eight students, some continuing at WMS and some from other schools, were a cohort of pioneers in what is today's EC Club House space. There's still a mural on MacClendon's Hardware's wall on the main drag in Woodinville that the crew, along with Attic students, crafted. The changes were both constant and dramatic—and subtle and incremental. We grew into new spaces; walls came down, new tables came in, **Alaine Davis** and later other faculty came on board, and student enrollment expanded. At WMS we accepted and then adapted and revised American Montessori Society curricular approaches and materials to create our own dynamic interpretation of a Middle School. Middle School students were encouraged to step up to challenging academics—and given the support to do so. WMS retained its commitment to a value Dr. Montessori placed on the nature and ethics of work; we worked to create a Junior High that asked of our students that they engage, participate and continue to develop their skills at making choices, managing time, being responsible and accepting that building a life is a work in progress, with progress made by doing the work.

Adding a High School was the next major change, with full four-year implementation of college and life-readiness courses in an accredited context. We rethought or created entirely new courses, curriculum and activities. Our focus on critical thinking in Year A, and on American Studies in Year B, for high school seniors and juniors, is in many ways unique; it's not curriculum out of a package but coursework specifically developed to ask students to dig deep into complex issues and history. For this to happen in a meaningful way, we as teachers have to give the students time and space to think, talk, write, present and think some more.

High School is a leap that has involved aspiration as well as commitment. We aspire to reach many young people who want to learn, and to continually enhance our offerings and physical facilities for our student body. We are committed to growing our staff, and our communication as staff —and that's happening every year.

We also keep our attention on our aspirations for our graduates as stated in our handbook, such as "strongly-held values including self-respect and respect for others..." and "the awareness that all life is interdependent."

As much as it can seem that High School can be about the size and contents of a physical building, I believe it is about building people, people who have been equipped with foundational global and national knowledge, and who have been asked to think, discuss and write about questions that start with "why" or "how might it be"—and that may not have an easy endpoint. I endeavor to encourage our students to think in questions, to become comfortable with uncertainties, to be able to query assumptions, to envision themselves in others' situations and to not only be aware that there is always more to learn, but also to be prepared—and curious—enough to make the effort to go on learning.

## Send us your updates

*Seasons* is published winter and summer each year, with newsgathering by Communications and Advancement Coordinator Emily Irwin. To submit your news, please [email Alums](#).



©2019 Woodinville Montessori School  
19102 North Creek Parkway, Bothell, WA 98011 &  
13965 NE 166th Street, Woodinville, WA 98072  
425-482-3184

[info@woodinvillemontessori.org](mailto:info@woodinvillemontessori.org) | [admissions@woodinvillemontessori.org](mailto:admissions@woodinvillemontessori.org)

SITE ADMIN

